

Environmental Sampling Team FAQs

What are you doing and why?

We are collecting samples of dust, air, and soil from homes in which case children have lived as well as other randomly selected homes in Churchill County. These samples will be analyzed for a large number of potential environmental contaminants. This information will help the Nevada State Health Division and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to determine if families with a child having leukemia were exposed to certain chemicals at a higher level than other families in the community.

Where will the samples you take be sent?

Arrangements have been made with a number of different governmental, as well as private, laboratories to analyze the samples. Different laboratories have different kinds of expertise. So it is necessary to use more than one lab because of the different kinds of substances that are being analyzed.

Are you going to let us know the results?

Yes.

How long before we receive the results?

It is difficult to predict how long it will take to receive all of the results back from all of the laboratories. It may take as long as 6 to 9 months. If preliminary results come back early and suggest that there is a dangerous situation in your home, you will be notified immediately.

Who else will receive the results?

The scientists from the Health Division and CDC will need to see the test results in order to complete their investigation. Both the Health Division and CDC operate under strict provisions of confidentiality and will not release test results from individual homes without your permission.

Why don't you test for _____?

A group of scientists from various governmental and academic institutions considered what substances should be included in the testing. They made their determination based on the availability of technology as well as an understanding of what things might be plausibly linked to leukemia from a biological perspective.

This leukemia cluster has been going on for more than a year. Why did it take so long for you to get started?

In science and in medicine, the search for truth must be precise and systematic if we really hope to obtain information that will benefit the people of this community. Therefore, it was necessary for us to develop protocols that would protect the samples from potential contamination. Also staff had to be trained in these protocols.

Given that it took so long, how do you know that whatever caused the leukemia is still here?

We don't know. However, this is the most comprehensive scientific investigation of a cancer cluster that has ever been done. We are using the best people, the best resources, and the best technology. We believe that in time, we will have a clearer picture of what is going on and that the data we are collecting will ultimately benefit the people of this community.

Will you be looking at the Navy and contamination sites at the base?

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is looking at contamination issues involving the Navy as part of a related study being done in conjunction with this investigation.

Will you be looking at the use of pesticides and other agricultural chemicals?

The samples we are collecting will be analyzed for pesticides and ...

Will you be looking at the contents of the smoke from ditch burning?

We are only collecting environmental samples from case homes and comparison homes. The ATSDR may look at the issue of ditch burning as a part of their study.

What data does NDEP have about environmental contamination in Fallon / Churchill County?

NDEP Response

How does NDEP make people clean up the environment?

NDEP Response

If you find something wrong in my home, who will be responsible for fixing it?

You are responsible for taking necessary actions to ensure that your home is free of environmental contaminants. If a third party caused the problem, you may need to consult with an attorney to find out what rights you have to hold them accountable.

What testing will NDEP be doing in Fallon?

NDEP is assisting the Nevada State Health Division and the CDC in conducting a cross sectional exposure assessment. This means that we will be collecting samples of dust, air, and soil from the homes of case families as well as comparison families.

How will this testing relate to what CDC and ATSDR are doing?

This testing relates primarily to the study being conducted by CDC. The Nevada State Health Division has asked CDC to conduct what is called a cross sectional exposure assessment. This means that families who have a child with leukemia will be compared to families of children who do not have leukemia. Each participating family will be asked to provide samples of blood, urine and some cells from the inside of their cheek. They will also be asked to allow us to collect samples of air, dust, and soil from their homes. This information will help the Nevada State Health Division and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to determine if families with a child having

leukemia were exposed to certain chemicals at a higher level than other families in the community.

Does NDEP regulate environmental releases from companies such as New America Tech.?

NDEP Response

Does NDEP have any regulatory authority over environmental contamination at the Navy Base?

NDEP Response

Has NDEP done anything to check on whether or not the jet fuel pipeline is leaking?

Yes. NDEP staff have walked that portion of the jet fuel pipeline that goes directly under the most populated areas of Fallon. They were looking for any gross signs of leakage. These signs might include unusual odors, staining of nearby soil, or plant life that is being harmed. Nothing indicating a leak was detected from this walk. NDEP staff also flew over the length of the pipeline using infrared videography. Gross leakage would show up as an unusual color due to evaporation of jet fuel if major leaks were present. The company that owns the pipeline has also contracted for testing designed to identify much smaller leaks. None of these tests have found evidence of leakage. **NDEP**

Response

What kind of air quality monitoring does NDEP do in Fallon?

NDEP Response

Just based on your personal opinion, what do you think is causing the leukemia?

There are many possible causes to consider. Investigators from the federal, state, and local level are conducting the most comprehensive scientific investigation of a cancer cluster that has ever been done. This process may take some time because in science and in medicine the search for truth must be precise and systematic if we really hope to benefit the people of this community.

Do you think I should move my family away from Fallon / Churchill County?

At this time there is no scientifically based reason to recommend that you move. However, moving is a personal decision and whatever decision you make will be right for you and your family. You can schedule an appointment with a professional at the Churchill County Mental Health Department to discuss these issues. If you mention that you have a concern related to the leukemia cluster, they will try to schedule an appointment within 1 week. Their telephone number is 775-423-7141.